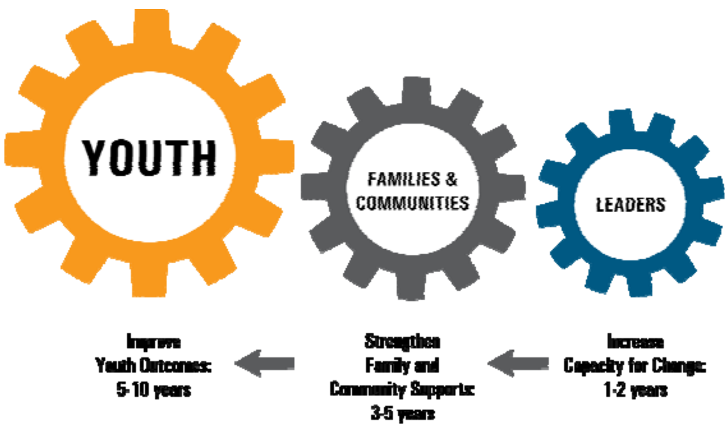
READY BY 21

GUIDE TO PROGRAM LANDSCAPE MAPPING

Ready by 21™

Changing the odds for children and youth by changing the way we do business.



Research suggests that it takes five to ten years for changes in community supports to make a real difference in improved outcomes for youth, such as decreased teen pregnancy or increased graduation rates. It is possible within a few years, however, to see significant changes in the capacity of those who are taking the lead in strengthening policies, programs and public demand. To better inform their decision-making, one of the first steps for leaders is to ascertain the level, coverage and quality of community supports.

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GETTING STARTED

Engaging Stakeholders and Defining the "Landscape" to be Mapped

Information is power. How much power, and whether it is power that unites and excels or power that fragments or stalls depends on why it is collected, who is involved and how (and sometimes even when and where) it is used. Those who commit to collect information can never completely control its development and use. But planning helps.

OBJECTIVE

Design and conduct a program landscape audit that can be completed in the available timeframe, sustained given available resources and used to convene program and community leaders.

Why do a Landscape Map?

Because information is power and most stakeholders believe that there is too little coordinated information about youth programs. Young people and parents report that they do not know what's available. Practitioners and program directors frequently operate in unproductive silos. Decision-makers and funders claim to have only fragments of the information they want and need about service and population reach and gaps. And the public is typically either under-informed or confused.

Creating a landscape map, even a basic one, gives all stakeholders – decision-makers, providers, and youth/families common information about a loose but important system of informal supports for youth. A system that research shows helps young people prevent or address problems and build strengths and skills.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER AT THE OUTSET

- Why do a landscape map?
- What is "the landscape"?
- Who should be engaged?
- How are you going to engage them?
  Who's asking?
  How do you make it easy?
- How do you want to analyze and present the data?
- How would you use data to generate and act on recommendations for change? From/by whom?

The Forum uses the term "landscape map" rather than program or services inventory or audit for two reasons. First, because we anticipate that, on the first or second tries, the information created will provide a general "lay of the land" but may not provide consistent detail in all areas. Second, because we believe that some type of graphic representation of the data is critical for generating a common base of reference. Communities are, of course, free to use whatever term works for them. The most important things to do is to be clear about the limitations of the information up front and to think early and often about ways to present the data.

What is “the landscape”?

If you had to draw a picture now of the program landscape in your community, what would you draw? Would you color neighborhoods differently to reflect general access? Would you make a growth chart and show that access increases or decreases with age? Would you create codes for the types of services, supports and opportunities you think young people need to have? Would you think of different youth populations (e.g. by race, ethnicity, family income, citizenship status) and create separate maps for each to force comparisons?

One way to begin this process is to ask those whom you will want to provide and/or use the information to anticipate what it looks like. Doing this in groups (perhaps at meetings or conferences that are already planned) can help generate interest and give you insights about important issues and dimensions.

Who should be engaged?

Obviously, the big question is who should fill out the survey: The programs and providers in your network? Every provider in your community/city? Those working with a particular population or being supported by a specific funding stream? You want to cast the net broad enough to get the lay of the land that someone feels is important. You want to create a map that someone wants to use. Being overly ambitious, however, can lead to low response rates that undermine the entire process.

So this is an important decision. You need to be cautious. You need to select a target group that you are confident you can get to respond. But you also need to be strategic. You need to provide information useful enough to generate discussion and responses from decision-makers, service providers and users – youth and families.

In deciding who to survey, think about the three main audiences for your information:

Youth/families | Providers | Decision-makers

These are broad audiences. Take a moment to fill in more specific information – which subgroups are you hoping to engage with your report? Older teens? Schools? Public service providers? Prevention funders?

Do you have any information or insights into how they would define the landscape? Have there been any youth mapping efforts (a process that sends young people into the community to document the services they use). Are there lists of providers that are associated with different funders or systems? Are there easy ways to find out which programs and providers they would be most interested in learning more about?

Having this information at hand will ensure that you extend your reach as broadly as you can and allow you to disclose up front important groups whom you were unable to reach with this survey.

How can you engage them?

Once you have a sense of who you might want to engage, do a quick check on your capacity to engage them. Presumably you can engage those who are active in your coalition or network, but what about the others? Perhaps it might be possible to get the stakeholders you can reach – youth/families, provider groups outside of your network, decision-makers – to assist you by making connections. Use a chart like this to assess your engagement horsepower:

Types of Providers targeted for survey (examples)	Those we can reach ourselves	Those other provider networks could reach	Those funders/ decision-makers could reach	Those youth/families could reach
Substance Abuse Prev.				
Gang Prevention				
After-school				
Youth Employment				

Making a plan to engage your stakeholders to help you engage providers helps with both sides of the engagement question – the technical and the motivational.

- You will need to decide on engagement methods (i.e., web-based survey, paper and pencil survey mailed out or handed out at gatherings).
- You also need to think about the cover letter or opening paragraph. Why should they do this? Does it benefit them to do it or hurt them not to? Will the information be shared with them and will they be interested? Who should sign the letter to encourage the greatest participation (e.g., leaders of your network? key funders who are interested in the results?)

Your stakeholders may have access to different engagement methods. They can also provide you with their perspectives on rationales and incentives for participation and may be willing to actually send out the survey or promote it in other ways.

THE SURVEY ITSELF

What is the survey's framework?

The Landscape Mapping survey and report out are primary tools for communicating your "actionable vision" with the public and decision-makers. The reports are designed to provide digestible reminders of the Big Picture to these audiences. The core idea to be conveyed through the report(s) is that ensuring that all youth are ready by 21 requires early and sustained investments (0 – 21) across a range of results or outcomes, and the Landscape Map provides one picture of understanding just how well the community is doing. Secondly, the reports reinforce the idea that "doing well" means more than not failing. The use of a balanced set of questions in the survey allow you to report on your community or network's efforts towards problem reduction as well as increases in preparation or participation.

In building the on-line Landscape Mapping survey, we considered the following core dimensions:

- Age. In order to allow for reports that could convey the "early and sustained supports to youth" message, we felt it important to cover at least two decades. We used commonly defined age groupings (i.e., 0-5, 6-10, 11-14, 15-18, 19-24) in this survey.
- Approach. The survey introduces the continuum of broad program delivery approaches moving from treatment to prevention, to development and preparation to leadership and engagement. Adding this element to the framework conveys the important communications message that preventing youth problems is not enough, and that preparation is essential, but not sufficient – without adequate leadership opportunities – in covering the continuum of youth supports and opportunities.
- Outcomes: The survey introduces a broad range of outcomes needed to be ready for college, work, life. The Forum uses *Learning, Working, Thriving, Connecting, Contributing* to capture the five broad areas in which young people need to be ready. More traditional language or frameworks (e.g., academic, vocational, health, social, civic) can be easily translated into this frame. The point is that reports convey a sense of how balanced the community/network is in providing opportunities for addressing the full range of outcomes through its programmatic landscape that are necessary for youths' well-being.
- Supports/Services. There is almost an endless list of specific supports and services that can be provided to children and youth. We organized more than 100 of them into the five outcome focuses mentioned in the bullet above. These broad categories serve as "closet organizers" for making sense of the full range of services/activities in which youth might be engaged, and allow for easily digestible snapshots of where the community/network's efforts seem to lie. There are other ways we could have organized the "closet" (for example, against the America's Promise list of five inputs or the National Academy of Sciences list of seven support areas). Again, there are ways to support translation between lists if your particular community is heavily invested in one of these common frames.

What questions does the survey ask?

Some of the questions are open-ended and some are closed. We wanted to balance between these, using closed-ended questions whenever possible for ease of analysis. As you look over the survey, you will see that it asks the following types of questions:

- **Organizational Information.** A single organization will fill out a short organizational profile *once*. This includes organizational contact information, size, type, and information on partnerships. Once this is filled out, an organization can complete separate *program* survey information for as many programs as desired. The organizational information will be automatically saved for any program associated with the primary organization.
- **Basic Program Information.** Each program in your organization will begin by filling out basic program information, including the program name, size, focus, numbers/demographics served, among other questions.
- **Services/Supports/Opportunities.** This section provides programs with the opportunity to check primary and secondary services provided. Additionally, this section contains questions about when, where and how services are provided; getting at question of availability, access and coverage.
- **Improvement.** Finally, the survey asks a few questions related to program improvement – specifically what resources the respondent believes would help improve services and how much these improvements could be expected to impact the reach of the program (i.e., ability to serve more youth).